

Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee – Approved Minutes
December 15, 2010
Mid-County Regional Services – 2424 Reddie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902

Members Present, Gregory Baker; Eleanor Duckett; Regina Dull, Jonathan Fink, Manny Hidalgo, Chelsea Johnson, Larysa Kurylas, Zoe Lefkowitz, Chris Lindsay, Diane Lynne, Thomas Martin, Patrick Naehu, Susan Petersen and Erin Roberts

Members Absent: Ciliny Alce, Melissa Brown, Maureen Carrington, Sara Lappano, Leslie McDermott, James Mensah, Bob Schilke, Stewart Tsao, Dave Taghipour and Fran Ware

County Staff Present: Rob Klein, Pete McGinnity, and Sharon Lasswell

Speakers: Bob Wulff, of B.F. Saul Co. and Sandra Tallant of M-NCPPC

Guests: Taylor Brown, Wheaton Patch; Linda Amendt, WUDAC Representative; Bernard Gelb; M. J. Jardaneh, Glenmont Forest Civic Association; Ed Murtagh, GreenWheaton; and Leah Haygood, GreenWheaton

Meeting Called to Order by the Chair, Mr. Baker, at 7:04 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION to approve the November minutes was made by Mr. Fink and seconded by Ms. Duckett. All were in favor and minutes were approved.

Sector Plan Update by Ms. Tallant

The 5th work session will be January 6, 2011, with a presentation by GreenWheaton. The Board will also discuss the CR Zone and will post material on the web site on December 22. There will be a work session in February to discuss the non-land use issues.

Once the Planning Board approves the changes to the Public Hearing Draft, staff will write a Planning Board Draft incorporating the changes. It then goes to the County Executive and the County Council, there will be a public hearing, then Council work sessions and ultimately the plan gets adopted. After the Sector Plan is adopted by the County Council, a Sectional Map Amendment is done, which will codify zoning changes.

Ms. Tallant suggested the committee focus on testimony preparation to the County Council using the matrix in the back of the work session packet. The matrix lists the issues by number with the staff response and the Board decision.

Using the material in Work Session #4, Mr. Martin will work with Ms. Dull to put all issues on-line in a survey (survey monkey) and provide everyone with the link so they can rank each issue as “**strongly for**” “**for**” “**against**” or “**strongly against**”. They will take an electronic straw poll and bring the results back to the full WRAC. The January WRAC meeting will be primarily devoted to discussing the Master Plan.

Feedback regarding the November 17 B. F. Saul Community Meeting and continued WRAC involvement – by Mr. Baker and Mr. Wulff with group discussion from WRAC members.

Mr. Baker felt the turn-out was good and the meeting was well run and organized. Many WRAC members attended and participated in the break out groups. Mr. Baker introduced Mr. Wulff of B. F. Saul.

Mr. Wulff indicated they were very pleased with the turn out and the community participation. They were looking to gather ideas and many of the ideas voiced at the workshop affirmed suggestions from earlier community meetings.

Wheaton area residents, businesses and community leaders shared their thoughts on what they would like to see in Wheaton's New Downtown. The development team and County officials outlined the process the team will use to develop a project concept plan. The participants then broke out into small discussion groups to provide their input on the following four topics: *desired land use and small business impact; streets and sidewalks; a town square and open space; and overall visions for the new downtown.* The developer team captured notes from the roundtable groups, which focused on the four subject areas. The feedback was broken down to include both the points that were reiterated from previous community discussions and the new input they had just received. A summary of the meeting is attached and can also be viewed on their web site at wheatonsnewdowntown.org

Mr. Wulff noted the non-English speaking segment of Wheaton was not well represented. Special outreach efforts will be made to go directly to these groups and organizations. Mr. Hidalgo suggested they may want to use the various County liaisons in smaller non-English speaking focus groups where the individuals will feel more comfortable. Ms. Tallant mentioned that Park and Planning found that breakfast or lunch meetings help to bring out the business owners.

Ms. Johnson observed while there was little diversity, there was a voice for that population at the various roundtable discussions. The three items of most importance at the roundtables were "to keep our diversity", "keep our ethnicity" and "keep the mom and pop shops".

Mr. Wulff was asked what is different, why would an office tenant or a hotel want to come to Wheaton now. Mr. Wulff said the B. F. Saul team brings creditability, experience and capital to go out to the market. All of these together may give them a standing that will allow companies to have confidence in them to come to a place they might not have come with a different developer. Wheaton's problem is not housing, the problem is it does not have an office market and it does not have a hotel. Having the Redline Metro stop, gives Wheaton the opportunity to have those things.

Mr. Wulff was asked what comes next. They must first solve how to develop the WMATA site. Where to move the bus bay. They are looking at various options. They will do more outreach, market research to prepare a concept plan; look at various uses i.e. office, hotel, retail, residential; determine the height and size of the buildings and where they best fit on the 8 acres; then they will perform economic analysis. When that is finished, they will make a presentation to WMATA and the County followed by another big community meeting sometime around

April 2011 to present the Concept Plan. Mr. Wulff will provide the WRAC with draft Concept Plans to review as they move along in the process.

Letter to Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) – by Ms. Petersen

On December 2, 2010, the subcommittee met with members from WUDAC and staff from the County's Department of Transportation (DOT) to discuss proposed pedestrian improvements to portions of Reddie Drive and Georgia Avenue.

MOTION—was made by Mr. Fink and seconded by Ms. Duckett to send a letter to Mr. Dan Somma, Chair of WUDAC. The letter recommends sending a joint letter, under the signatures of both WRAC and WUDAC Chairs, to the County Executive, requesting his support for a unified design of pedestrian buffers on both Georgia Avenue and Reddie Drive. WRAC respectfully asks that WUDAC consider this at their January 2011 monthly meeting. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Redevelopment Report – by Mr. Klein

On December 9, Westfield provided the Planning Board with an overview of their long-term sketch plans for redevelopment and integration with downtown Wheaton. Their vision will turn the mall “inside out”, rather than the traditional suburban mall concept of looking in on itself. This change will produce higher densities, mixed-uses, open spaces, pedestrian friendly accessibility, and provide a front door to the rest of the downtown. Mr. Agliata is interested in presenting to WRAC members at the February 2011 meeting. Westfield is looking to begin this transformation by activating their land facing Veirs Mill Road.

Construction on Costco could begin early next year (2011) and be completed around the end of 2012. The gas station is proceeding with the Special Exception process.

Subcommittee Reports

Planning & Visioning – Mr. Martin

- January meeting is cancelled. Their next meeting will be February 7.
- They will be working on the Sector Plan testimony.
- As the Sector Plan is slowing down, they look forward to working with B.F. Saul on developing the future of Wheaton. He encouraged other members to attend the subcommittee meeting in February.

Project Review – Ms. Petersen

- Next meeting will be January 27, 2011. They will discuss their framework for reviewing projects.

Economic Development – Ms. Duckett

- The subcommittee continues to map data related to homeowners and civic associations within a 1-mile radius of the Wheaton Metro.
- They want to contact each person by phone to verify the contact information and to provide the person with some information about Wheaton.
- Their next meeting will be January 4, 2011 at 5:30.

Green Wheaton – by Ms. Leah Haygood and Ed Murtagh of GreenWheaton

- Ms. Haygood provided a brief overview of GreenWheaton.
- They are working on a simple three-part vision for GreenWheaton making sustainability a part of the defining identity of it. The three parts are: green solutions, green jobs and keeping Wheaton unique.
- They have a GreenWheaton email list (list serve) if anyone is interested.
- They are not only looking at the Central Business District, they are also looking at the surrounding areas.
- DEP is targeting Greenwood as a “rainscape” neighborhood. It will be a monitoring station to help determine how effective green infrastructure is in meeting our ability to clean up stormwater.
- Wheaton Rescue Squad is making a big effort to green their new facility that should go out to bid this month and could be awarded next month.
- They are looking at green infrastructure to clean up Sligo Creek and Rock Creek.
- An informal meeting will be held at Leah’s home on Sunday December 19.
- The group meets the 4th Tuesday of each month.
- They are moving in the direction of incorporating as a non-profit tax-exempt organization.

Selection of WRAC Representative to cover Monthly Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) Meetings

It was recommended that WRAC send one of their members to cover WUDAC’s monthly meetings and report back any pertinent information at the full WRAC meetings. WUDAC meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 5:00 to 6:30 pm. Mr. Baker circulated a sign-up sheet. Three people signed up: **January 11**-- Tom Martin; **February 8** -- Patrick Naehu; and **July 12** -- Susan Petersen.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Please note: your name will become public information, recorded in the minutes of this WRAC Committee meeting, which may be photocopied and disseminated to various groups, and may appear on the internet and become retrievable by internet search engines.”

ATTACHMENT

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FROM BREAKOUT SESSION DISCUSSIONS

1. DESIRED LAND USES AND SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT

Themes reiterated by the community

- ☐ Existing landmarks such as Chuck Levin's and Marchone's should be preserved
- ☐ Maintain economic and ethnic diversity
- ☐ Maintain existing small businesses
- ☐ Keep the "Main Street" feel with a focus on the human scale for new development
- ☐ Attract new "white collar" jobs
- ☐ Provide more options for retail and restaurants: size and price point
- ☐ Need for anchor uses: Office, Hotel etc.

Additional input provided by the community

- ☐ Incorporate best aspects of Bethesda, Rockville and Silver Spring without losing Wheaton's unique character
- ☐ Leverage the METRO to attract future tenants and anchors
- ☐ Provide more housing options such as townhomes and condominiums - not just rental
- ☐ Attract Government Agency Offices / Mid-Range Hotel for anchor use
- ☐ Existing chains such as the IHOP / Safeway do not threaten small businesses
- ☐ Future office workers will create opportunities for local businesses
- ☐ Incorporate uses that attract a diverse demographic
- ☐ Develop a Theater / Arts District
- ☐ Capture COSTCO patrons
- ☐ Create a Façade Improvement Program for existing small businesses
- ☐ Create a Green Enterprise Zone / Tax Breaks for Green Businesses Program
- ☐ Provide Support / Incentives / Incubate / Economic Stability for small businesses
- ☐ Consider the disruptive nature of construction on existing business operations
- ☐ Provide adequate parking for future uses
- ☐ Public Wi-Fi access
- ☐ Additional desired uses: Movie Theater, Hardware Store, Office Supply, Community Medical Center, Extended Stay Hotel / Corporate Apartments

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Time: 7-9 pm on Wednesday, November 17, 2010

Location: Crossway Community, Inc.

www.wheatonsnewdowntown.org

2. STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

Themes reiterated by the community

- ☐ A "Coordinated" Streetscape
- ☐ Bike lanes and pedestrian friendly streets
- ☐ Traffic calming and safer pedestrian crossings throughout Wheaton's New

Downtown

- ☐ Need wide sidewalks with outdoor dining, benches, trees and human scaled lighting
- ☐ Create a landscape buffer between cars and pedestrians
- ☐ Improve pedestrian connections to Metro, especially the pedestrian bridge
- ☐ Improve access to Metro for people with disabilities, strollers etc.
- ☐ More green, less asphalt

Additional input provided by the community

- ☐ “Flexible Streetscape”: Use internal streets and sidewalks for dining, concerts and art
- ☐ “Sustainable Streetscape”: Bio swales, pervious paving, rain gardens and environmentally sensitive lighting
- ☐ “Local Green Streetscape”: Collaborate with Brookside Gardens to create a local plant palette
- ☐ “Seasonal Signage”: Banners, Lighting etc.
- ☐ Create a safer pedestrian environment at night
- ☐ “Signature Lighting Scheme” for Wheaton’s New Downtown
- ☐ Improve pedestrian connectivity between the Westfield Mall and Wheaton’s New Downtown
- ☐ Improve street crossing across Reddie Drive for improved access to Metro
- ☐ Improve ability to penetrate the Triangle for cars and pedestrians
- ☐ Improve connectivity between existing garages and the Metro
- ☐ Better signage for access to Metro
- ☐ Create East-West connections through the Town Square for bikes and pedestrians
- ☐ Locate Bikeshare facilities at the Metro, Mall, Library and Wheaton Regional Park
- ☐ Provide secure bike storage near Metro
- ☐ Provide adequate parking
- ☐ Provide well lit paths to and from Metro
- ☐ Provide bus stop shelters
- ☐ Create a pet friendly streetscape
- ☐ Maintain walkability during construction

3. TOWN SQUARE AND OPEN SPACE

Themes reiterated by the community

- ☐ An appropriate place for Taste of Wheaton and Farmer’s Market
- ☐ Create a heart for the entire community: A Central Town Square
- ☐ Unifying, high quality and sustainable landscape features
- ☐ Support outdoor concerts / arts / festivals
- ☐ A safe place to sit outside and meet people
- ☐ Flexible space for a variety of uses
- ☐ Promote social interaction
- ☐ Pocket parks and landscaped gardens
- ☐ More green, less asphalt

- ☐ Effective signage
- ☐ A Gateway feature at Veirs Mills and Georgia Avenue
- Additional input provided by the community**
- ☐ “Public Money, Public Space”: Town Square to be accessible to all, including people with disabilities
- ☐ Integrate cultural diversity into the Town Square design
- ☐ Daytime and Night Time economy and activities (18/7 activity)
- ☐ Locate Town Square near Metro
- ☐ Connect Town Square to the Westfield Mall
- ☐ Businesses should face Town Square
- ☐ A model for sustainability
- ☐ Create a plaza over the existing Bus Bays (Better than the one at Bethesda)
- ☐ Ensure great visibility from surrounding roads towards Town Center
- ☐ All new parking should be underground
- ☐ Additional desired activities: Ice skating, Shakespeare in the Park, Screen on the Green, street vendors, culinary classes, chess tables, fireworks
- ☐ Seating and design elements that appeal to kids and adults
- ☐ More places to sit within the entire community: pocket parks for active and passive spaces
- ☐ Improve Metro signage
- ☐ Add art to the Metro entrance (Murals, sculptures etc.)
- ☐ Implement a Trolley system for easy access to the Town Square

4. OVERALL VISION FOR WHEATON’S NEW DOWNTOWN

Themes reiterated by the community

- ☐ Don’t lose Wheaton’s unique character: Keep Wheaton “Funky”
- ☐ Don’t become Bethesda, Silver Spring or Rockville
- ☐ Lack of cohesiveness: create an identity for Wheaton’s New Downtown
- ☐ Keep the small businesses integral to Wheaton’s future, provide affordable commercial rents
- ☐ Balancing new development while retaining diversity
- ☐ Good transportation system with adequate parking
- ☐ A Gateway feature at Veirs Mills and Georgia Avenue
- ☐ Higher density, mixed-use close to Metro
- ☐ A sustainable place with an emphatic “Green Network”
- ☐ A safe, walkable, family friendly place
- ☐ A central Town Square
- ☐ Better connection between Mall and Town Square
- ☐ Sustainability (green roofs, stormwater infiltration, rain gardens etc.)
- ☐ A Center for Arts and Entertainment
- ☐ Entertainment for youth (theaters, bowling, skating)
- ☐ A place to live, work, and play
- ☐ A large employer to generate daytime activity
- ☐ More activities to draw you in – a destination
- ☐ A broader range of restaurants, and businesses

- ☐ Late night food and night life

Additional input provided by the community

- ☐ Future growth to focus on diversity, combined with Transit Oriented Development
- ☐ Incorporate best parts of Bethesda, Rockville and Silver Spring while retaining Wheaton's unique character
- ☐ Attract a major public sector employer for "White Collar" jobs
- ☐ Create connective tissue or "Capillaries" that strengthen diversity of people and businesses
- ☐ Diversity in retail and restaurants: size and price point
- ☐ Add some national brand restaurants
- ☐ More "Market – Rate" Housing
- ☐ More home ownership options: Townhomes, Condominiums – not just rental
- ☐ Scale – generally would like 6 story building, not too overwhelming
- ☐ Anchors to form "Book Ends" for development
- ☐ Architectural diversity – Keep it interesting, not everything the same by using different styles. Vary texture and colors
- ☐ Find a way to introduce history/sense of place – perhaps relating to Frank Wheaton and the Civil War
- ☐ Public monument to General Wheaton
- ☐ Create an exciting and inviting entrance to the Metro
- ☐ Minimize loitering near Metro entrances
- ☐ Create a new Metro entrance fronting Reedie Drive near Town Square
- ☐ Lack of street activity, dark areas and crime inhibit pedestrians
- ☐ Provide medical services and doctor's offices
- ☐ Provide flexible use, public and private parking, street closings
- ☐ Community Recreation Facility including a swimming pool
- ☐ Develop a Theater / Arts District
- ☐ Amphitheater, flex space
- ☐ Pet friendly environment
- ☐ Minimum disruption to Metro access and local businesses during construction